

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: May 4, 2021
Time: 10:00am
Place: Via Zoom Meeting
Egremont

Present via zoom meeting were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie.

Others participating via zoom: Richard Allen, Sue Funk, Cara Becker, Jim Golden, Mary McGurn, Chuck Ogden, Eileen Vining, Fred Gordan, Juliette Haas, Joan Goodkind, Robin Goldberg.

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the April 20 and April 27 meeting were accepted with minor edits that Vice-Chairman Vermeulen will get to Office Administrator Brazie.

SCHEDULED ISSUES:

At 10:02 am the hearing on the pole location applications filed by Fiber Connect for fiber conduit to be installed on the upper portion of Hickory Hill and two poles to hold fiber be installed on Baldwin Hill North. The Board voted unanimously to approve both applications as presented. Hearing closed at 10:08am.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Board accepted with regrets the resignation of Nick Keene from the Planning Board. A joint meeting will be held with the Planning Board possibly on May 11.

The Board discussed with Housing Committee members Joan Goodkind, Fred Gordan and Richard Allen the need for funds for the Committee for site evaluation to help finalize the request for proposals(RFP). After discussion the Board voted unanimously to amend the article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant from \$4,500 to \$10,000 for this purpose. The RFP will not be issued until the site evaluation has been done. A meeting will be scheduled to discuss clarification of the scope of services with James Scalise of S&K Design. There are formatting issues with the RFP as well that will need to be corrected, and it was felt that the eval criteria could be condensed. Richard Allen reported that due to delays in the Internal Revenue Service, the Housing Trust is going forward, but will likely not be available for this housing project.

The Board, after clarification on the roles of those involved with the Municipal Vulnerability Program Planning Committee, voted unanimously to appoint Juliette Haas as the MVP Project Manager and Municipal Contact. It was clarified that Juliette will do this as a part of her Board of Health Director duties for no additional compensation.

Tax Collector Sue Funk expressed concern over the resent lack of response to issues with Tax Bills from Regional Resource Group(RRG), the Town's contracted Assessor Consultant. There are many issues ranging from incorrect addresses, incorrect owners being billed to incorrect evaluations that need to be corrected prior to the next tax bill round. All have been reported to RRG with no response. Sue

expressed her concern that the FY 22 tax bills, which file from the Assessors she will be asking for in another week, will not be correct. Chairman McGurn noted that he has reached out to Harald Scheid, CEO of RRG and has not had a return phone call. Selectperson Brazie noted that the current contract expires June 30, 2021. She will also reach out to Mr. Scheid. Vice-Chair Vermeulen noted, as she has in the past, that they have taken on so many new towns that they are stretched thin. Assessor Robin Goldberg agreed and said she understood the frustration. She thought issues with the new system, Tyler, were at the root of some of this as it is very complex and has been hard to learn, especially during the pandemic. She also thought the fact that RRG personnel hadn't been to town hall in the past year was a problem and the fact that only one Assessor was allowed to be in the office at a time was also a contributing factor. It was suggested that the Town adopt a different operation format with RRG but Robin said that the Assessor like to do the work and feel they can give a personal service to residents. A solution will have to be found quickly.

OLD BUSINESS:

MassDOT has informed the Town that Barbara Kalish, a member of the Egremont Historical Commission(EHC), sent an email to Mass Historical Commission (MHC) expressing displeasure with the pendant light fixture chosen for the Route 23/41 lighting project. Because the MHC has made a negative finding on the project, it may result result in the MassDOT funds being pulled from the project. The Board is being asked to settle the difference of opinion with EHC. The engineers have reported that the lantern light fixture that EHC prefers does not diminish the lighting effect significantly so does not diminish the safety factor of the lights. The Board expressed it's displeasure with a sole member of the Commission contacting MHC with concerns. EHC will discuss the issue at its meeting on May 5, which Vice-Chair Vermeulen will attend. The Board will recess its meeting to Thursday morning at 9am to discuss the issue again. Office Administrator Brazie will report to MassDOT on Thursday morning at 10am. The Board will confirm that the lantern fixture has the same remote control capabilities that the pendant light has.

COVID-19:

Board of Health Chairman Chuck Ogden would like a path forward for getting all employees vaccinated against COVID or establishing a policy regarding ramifications of not getting vaccination. Unfortunately the employees not vaccinated are Union members. Personnel Director Cara Becker and Covid Compliance Officer Jayne Smith have done all they feel they can do to get information to employees about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. The Board of Health will suggest protocols for those unvaccinated. Chuck also asked the Board to consider requiring employees to wear a Vaccine Passport while on the job. Selectperson Brazie suggested that such a policy not be adopted until the Board has spoken with employees. Office Administrator Brazie will seek information on what other town's are doing. Board of Health Director Juliette Haas will follow up with the Health Alliance to see if they had any suggestions. This subject, and the plans to re-open Town Hall, will be discussed on the 18th.

It was agreed to still impose the requirement for masks at the Transfer Station as it so busy it isn't possible to safely social distance. At French Park residents will be reminded to mask up when unable to social distance and not with family members. Both of these policies will be distributed to town residents and signage will be posted.

BUDGET/TOWN MEETING:

The Board reviewed the layout of articles as proposed by Vice-Chair Vermeulen. The layout attempts to give a carrot before each stick, with articles that would gain the town revenue being voted on before large monetary items. Chairman McGurn wanted to look further at the money issues. The original layout had the borrowing items about mid-way to give attendees a break while they cast their

secret ballots. The warrant will be reviewed again at the May 11 meeting.

FOLLOW UPS:

Conversations are still ongoing with Holyoke Gas & Electric regarding the Back-up Broadband Network Operations agreement.

Conversations are still ongoing between the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Mass Fisheries & Wildlife and Fiber Connect regarding pole placement along Brookvale Road.

SELECTMEN'S ITEMS:

Chairman McGurn would like to formulate a Grants Policy based on the best practices that Town Accountant Paul Lisi had proposed. This will be discussed at the May 18 meeting.

The Board will meet on May 11 and May 18 at 10am via zoom.

At 12:03pm the Board voted to recess its meeting to Thursday, May 6 at 9:00am.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.21/may4

The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.